not be in the commercial interests of the contracting parties to disclose specific details of the contracts/agreements. Since the discussions were held purely on commercial basis, no assistance was expected from the foreign parties. However, the visits of these delegations are expected to improve the customer/business relationships with the overseas trading partners.

Coke Oven-Battery Project in VSP

2636. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has decided to commission Coke Oven-Battery in the plant, to keep the plant running throughout the year;

(b) if so, the details of the project;

(c) whether Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has entered into a tie-up with any company for this purpose; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The proposed fourth Coke Oven-Battery will be similar in design and capacity to the existing three batteries at VSP with some additional improved features. The Coke Oven-Battery shall have 7m, tall 67 number ovens of 41.6 cum useful volume. A coke dry cooling plant will be provided. The fixed cost of the project is estimated to be Rs. 287 crores.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Categorisation of NMDC

†2637. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal to impart the status of Nav Ratna to National Mineral Development Corporation, by bringing it out from the category of Mini-Ratna, is under Government's consideration;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the action Government propose to take in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) to (c) Presently, Government to examining the proposal of up-gradation of National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) from Miniratna Category (I) to Navaratna status and as such any action on this proposal can be proposed only after this examination is over.

Market Orientation of Steel Prices

2638. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some inputs into steel industry like coal, power, railway, freight, prices of diesel and petrol and wages of workers, are Administratively controlled by Government departments, with the result that steel prices are currently market oriented and go up or down, depending upon market forces;

(b) if so, whether Government have a proposal to do away this big anomaly, so that Indian steel companies can compete with global companies; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) The cost of raw materials, power, freight and fuel are determined by the pricing policies of the concerned Departments/ agencies. These pricing policies are themselves being influenced, in an increasing measures, by the market forces. The wage structure in steel industry is determined by the wage review mechanism of the public sector/ private sector steel units. Besides these factors, cost of production, and consequently the pricing of steel products, are also determined by factors such as scale of production, technology adopted, locational advantages, cost of capital *etc.* Thus prices of various steel items are decided, in the ultimate analysis, by the interplay of various market forces.

(b) and (c) There is no anomaly in regard to pricing of steel products. After decontrol of steel items in 1991-92 as part of the process of economic